



State Journal/Suzanne Feliciano

Kentucky State University student government president Leonard Clemons, left, and first vice president Christopher Hogan outlined committee duties during the first meeting of KSU student government members last Tuesday in the student center.

Kentucky State's student government president, who's also an ordained minister, isn't exactly partying his way through college.

Kentucky State University senior Leonard Clemons wears many hats — second-term Student Government Association president, student regent, chairman of the Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents, member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. and now an ordained Baptist minister.

It is rough finding time to juggle all of his tasks, but he said he was born to serve.

Clemons sat down with Staff Writer Molly Williamson to talk about his goals for the year and his many roles.

Why did you want to be student body president again?

Once I found out the opportunity was available, I thought about it for a very, very long time. Some people were asking me about it, but I had come to the decision that I wasn't going to run again. Then, at the last minute, a lot of people started (encouraging) me to run. So I said, "Well, let me give it a try." There was only one person who has done it before and they were successful. I figured I would try and I won.

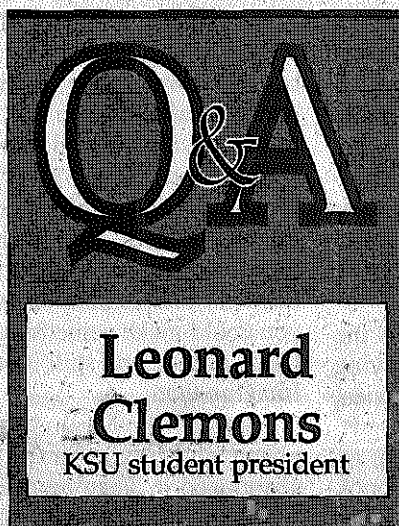
Also, I get to see through some of the things that we wanted to start last year and make sure those things got accomplished. Student governments often don't get a consistency within our officers as far as re-election because there's new leadership every year. In this unique situation, I guess my experience, along with the rest of the student government officers who are exceptional at what they do — they bring innovative ideas — the school year is kicking off to a great start.

What are some of the initiatives that you started last year that you want to continue?

I'm pretty big on having activities sponsored by our student government free to students. They have so much else to worry about as far as tuition. I am also trying to gain KSU a little bit more recognition as far as its history as a (historically black college). I think that is very important and sometimes we get overlooked throughout the nation. We are one of the farther north HBCUs.

Also, I want to reassure students that student government is really here to look after their better interests and to promote, develop and provide for the general welfare of the student body.

I want to make sure that when they have a concern, it is being met and reached, that the services that they pay the university for, they are receiving. (I want) to make sure students are represented in all capacities and all the major decisions of the university, such as when a building is being built, when a vice-president is maybe being hired, or a president being hired or a dean being



sought after. Any type of aspect that can affect the student body, they need to be represented at the table equally.

Would you serve as that representative or would it be someone from your staff?

Usually on university standing committees, they would ask me to appoint someone, if I don't sit in myself. I usually appoint a student I feel will be very capable of representing the student body in its best interest. We also have separate committees within student government. There are a couple committees that we did create this year. We created the student concerns committee so that students just won't be coming in and telling us a lot of their issues. They can address our student concerns committee and propose whatever resolutions or solutions to our student body senate and we can go forth from there. We wanted to kind of create a document trail as well as an organized way of doing things.

We also created an appropriations committee for organizations that might need some funds.

It's really like I said earlier, following through with a lot of things and setting the foundation for whoever may come after (us as officers). It won't be something that they have to start from scratch. It would be a great foundation and they can just continue it, which will make their jobs easier.

What are your goals for this year?

We have become much more fiscally responsible, not saying that we weren't before, but the budget we created for student government is a lot more detailed. We found we had funds for other things and whatnot. Also, I want to get the students more involved in some of the issues, not only within the university, but also locally within the community and within the state. I know students had a ball last time at the education rally that we had last year (at the Capitol to ask for more affordable tuition) and I was glad to see that Kentucky State showed up and gave support, along with

the other public institutions.

Kentucky State is here and I think this is a hidden jewel of education in Kentucky. But day-by-day and hour-by-hour, everyone is starting to see who we are. It is through the works of (KSU President) Dr. (Mary Evans) Sias. She is doing an excellent job during her tenure. I don't see too many negative blemishes with Kentucky State University, as may have been portrayed in previous years. I don't see any negative aspects in the future. I just see a very, very bright, positive future. And I'm not even saying we're going to see (the bright future) come. We're in the midst of it now. I just can't wait to see the finished product when it's done.

How are you going to involve the students more in the community?

We have a community service committee, which our Miss KSU, Chatoya Hayes, is going to chair this year. That is one of the things our Mister and Miss KSU are very adamant about, getting the students involved in the community. They are going to go out and find some community service events such as working at the (ACCESS) soup kitchen (on Second Street). Recently, we had some students help with Special Olympics calling ball games. We want to be as much a part of the community as possible and let them know we're not just a university that's here. I feel that we financially benefit the city very well and we can do the same service-wise.

Tell me a little bit about serving as the chair of the Kentucky Student Body Presidents. Are you the first one from KSU?

Yes. This is only our second year as being a part of that board. In our first year, I had the privilege of being elected vice chair. I guess with the experience of me being re-elected (as KSU's student government president) and working with (Morehead State University Student Government President) Jason Marion last year, who was our chair, I was able to become chair this year.

What are your goals as chair?

About Leonard Clemons

Age: 23

Hometown: Chicago

Title: Second-term Student Government Association president, KSU student regent, Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents chair, member Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.

Major: Biology

Next step: To pursue dual graduate degrees in business administration and higher education

Clemons on...

His priorities: "I'm pretty big on having activities sponsored by our student government free to students. They have so much else to worry about as far as tuition. I am also trying to gain KSU a little bit more recognition as far as its history as a (historically black college) ... Also, I want to reassure students that student government is really here to look after their better interests and to promote, develop and provide for the general welfare of the student body."

Reaching out: "We want to be as much a part of the community as possible and let them know we're not just a university that's here. I feel that we financially benefit the city very well and we can do the same service-wise."

His changing interests: "When I first came to Kentucky State I wanted to be a pediatrician but that changed quickly. I love science, but I found out that's not my love and that it might not be my niche. Once I got to the service offices, I just fell in love with it and that's become my passion."

Kind of the same thing we have for our student body but more on a larger scale for all students of publicly funded institutions. I want to make sure that some of their issues are being addressed, their concerns are being heard. Also, we exchange ideas for initiatives and programs. We compare and contrast our student governments and give each other ideas to make each other's student government a little bit more effective. It also creates a union within the universities. I think it is so great that students are able to form something like that and it has been working pretty well.

How do you think you serving as chair will benefit Kentucky State University?

Everybody knows that it's a publicly funded institution but it's the smallest one. So in that aspect, by being a part of this and serving as president, we are seen a little bit more in a more

positive light. They know that we, too, down here have concerns and issues. We also have a great university, and some of those same concerns and issues they have at larger institutions, we have here. But if we work together collectively, I'm sure there is a resolution to any problem.

What do you think are some of the issues facing students at all public institutions?

It's no secret that the number one issue is tuition and tuition affordability for students. Institutions have raised their tuition and for the most part they have just cause because of the economy – the rise in cost. And some (universities) didn't receive some of the things that they needed in state appropriations – Kentucky State being one of those universities. So tuition is a big issue for students. Hopefully, financial aid that's available is adjusted with (tuition cost) as well. I feel like that is always going to be an issue for students – tuition and affordability – because we want to educate as many people as possible. If they are willing to be educated, then I think they should be educated.

How would you make it more affordable? Do you have any ideas?

Dr. Sias has done a marvelous job with getting the Scholarship Gala kicked off at Kentucky State University, creating more schol-

arship funds. Even here at our student government this year, we created book scholarships for students that were in financial need. Some (scholarships) we started last year and kind of added to them this year. Any type of scholarship or grant availability, we try to maximize those dollars so they can be used so students can stay in school and they don't have to go home for financial reasons. I'm a firm believer that if a student should go home for anything, the last reason should be financial reasons, because those can be fixed.

How do you manage your time with serving on so many committees, becoming a minister?

When I first got into student government as second vice-president, I really had to sit down and get things figured out. If I'm not able to do it 100 percent, then I will try to find someone else to do it. One thing that someone told me at a conference is to calculate all the hours in a day, then all the hours in a week and ask yourself how do you spend your time? We only have so much time on earth and nobody knows the day nor the hour (he or she will die), so it's best, I guess from my aspect, to get as much service in as possible to mankind.

It took me a little while to realize that while you're here, in your time on earth, how much service you give to the community and give to your fellow men and women is very important. If you can maximize that, wonders can happen. If you can influence one person, then you can influence many. Within our time, a lot of the time might be wasted when we just sit in front of the TV not doing anything. Someone could be influenced or someone could have a life-changing moment.

I try to balance it out. I think the thing that makes it good for me is that I enjoy what I do, so when you enjoy what you do you kind of adjust your lifestyle. When you enjoy what you do, you really don't have a problem with it. I kind of found my niche in what I want to do.

When I first came to Kentucky State I wanted to be a pediatrician but that changed quickly. I love science, but I found out that's not my love and that it might not be my niche. Once I got to the service offices, I just fell in love with it and that's become my passion.

I love my days. Even though I might be working, I'm working on something for the students or something that affects the university or something for my fraternity or another organization I have fun while I'm doing it, so it really doesn't bother me as much.